

Actualization of Religious Moderation in Multicultural Society in Kerta Buana Village, Kutai Kartanegara Regency

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Abstract

This study explores the actualization of religious moderation within the multicultural community of Kutai Kartanegara. Efforts to promote principles of religious moderation remain a focus, particularly among the multicultural population of Kerta Buana Village in Tenggarong Seberang District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan Province. This study identifies strategies for implementing religious moderation in multicultural communities, offering an adaptable model for other regions across Indonesia. This research utilizes a case study approach, with data sourced from interviews and field findings. The study aims to develop a conceptual framework for villages seeking to actualize religious moderation, specifically within multicultural settings. A multicultural society is one characterized by diversity across ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religions. Such diversity requires proactive measures in village governance and community engagement to foster harmony, peace, and tolerance, while preventing the formation of divisive, intolerant groups within or among multicultural communities.

Keywords: Actualization, Religious Moderation, Multicultural Society

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas tentang aktualisasi moderasi beragama pada masyarakat multicultural di Kutai Kartanegara. Mengingat, hingga saat ini upaya dalam melaksanakan prinsip moderasi beragama terus ditekankan khususnya pada masyarakat multikultural di Desa Kerta Buana Kecamatan Tenggarong Seberang Kabupaten Kutai Kartanegara Provinsi Kalimantan Timur. Setidaknya dapat ditemukan strategi dalam upaya pengaktualisasian moderasi beragama pada masyarakat multikultural, sehingga dapat diimplementasikan di berbagai daerah yang ada di Indonesia. Penelitian ini merupakan jenis penelitian studi kasus (*case studies research*), yaitu penelitian yang sumber datanya didapatkan berdasarkan hasil wawancara dan temuan data di lapangan. Penelitian ini akan menghasilkan struktur konsep desa dalam mengaktualisasikan moderasi beragama khususnya pada masyarakat yang multikultural. Masyarakat yang multikultural yaitu masyarakat yang memiliki keberagaman pada suatu wilayah, baik suku, budaya, bahasa dan agama. Dengan adanya keberagaman itu maka perlu mengambil tindakan seperti pengelolaan dan pembinaan aparatur desa dan masyarakat yang seimbang guna mewujudkan kerukunan, kedamaian, dan toleransi serta menghindari adanya kubu-kubu masyarakat

yang intoleransi terhadap kelompoknya maupun antar masyarakat yang multikultural lainnya.

Kata Kunci: Aktualisasi, Moderasi Beragama, Masyarakat Multikultural

Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural nation, with a complex diversity that justifies the label of a truly multicultural society. Factors contributing to Indonesia's multiculturalism include its geographical position, historical factors, and the variety of ethnicities, religions, races, and intergroup affiliations (SARA) spanning from Sabang to Merauke. This diversity is an inescapable and precious gift from God Almighty, meant to be embraced wholeheartedly. Recognizing this, the government has taken measures to foster peace across the nation, such as establishing the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), which promotes interfaith tolerance and serves as a platform to address community aspirations in enhancing religious tolerance.

The ongoing process of actualizing religious moderation requires balancing human-to-human and human-to-God relations across all faiths, aiming to steer away from extreme right or left ideologies and maintain a middle path. This approach highlights that religious moderation emphasizes and upholds the core values of faith and unity. Therefore, it is crucial to continually promote the concept of religious moderation at every level, from the smallest community to the largest social structures.

Religious moderation is a concept familiar across all faiths, aimed at fostering interfaith harmony and peaceful coexistence. Once the fundamental principles of religious moderation are established within each faith, the government must implement policies to integrate core religious teachings with the realities of a multicultural society. However, caution is required regarding potential threats rooted in or acting in the name of religion. Given religion's profound emotional resonance with adherents, such threats—especially from those with fervent religious devotion who view religion as sacred and inviolable—cannot be dismissed, as they can lead to conflict.

Kerta Buana Village, located in Tenggara Seberang District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan Province, is an exemplary model village for religious moderation, given its diversity in ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and religions. The village includes approximately 19 ethnicities and 5 religions, making the achievement of peace, harmony, and mutual tolerance a significant challenge. Yet, the village remarkably maintains strong intercommunity harmony.

This article aims to analyze how village authorities work to promote religious moderation to ensure interfaith harmony, especially within the multicultural community of Kerta Buana Village. Therefore, this research focuses on the topic, The Actualization of Religious Moderation in Multicultural Communities (A Case Study

of Interfaith Harmony in Kerta Buana Village, Tenggara Seberang District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency).

Research Method

The research method employed is a qualitative approach, where data is expressed in words, sentences, narrative expressions, and images, utilizing a case study type. This case study approach is chosen to allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of social interactions within a community, facilitating a more comprehensive comprehension of how the observed cases unfold naturally. For data collection, the researcher uses interviews, observations, and documentation.

Interview informants in this study include village officials such as the Village Secretary, Community Empowerment Institutions (LPM), village government representatives, and several village residents. Interviews are conducted to obtain direct information that aligns with the study's objectives. Observations are then made to describe the setting, all activities that occur, and the individuals involved. Documentation is used to gain insights from the perspectives of the study's subjects, utilizing both written and direct media sources.

Data analysis in this study follows a structured process: data collection, selecting and focusing on relevant information, simplifying complex data, narratively describing the data, and transforming the data into conclusions. To ensure data validity, the researcher conducts triangulation, which includes source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation.

Result and Discussion

Below is a discussion on the Implementation of Religious Moderation in the Multicultural Community of Kerta Buana Village, Kutai Kartanegara Regency. To ensure a more systematic presentation, this discussion is focused on the following points:

A. Kerta Buana Village as a Multicultural Village

Understand Kerta Buana Village as a multicultural community, it is essential to highlight the village's diversity, representing Indonesia's national identity, renowned for its cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity. This diversity categorizes Indonesia as a multicultural society—a society comprising various ethnicities and rich in diversity. This diversity includes race, ethnicity, culture, and religion. A multicultural society, by definition, is one in which a population consists of people from various ethnic backgrounds and cultural traditions.

The concept of multiculturalism emphasizes accepting groups with differing identities without judgment based on cultural, ethnic, gender, language, or religious differences. This principle aligns closely with religious values, underscoring that

cultural and religious aspects should coexist harmoniously to foster spirituality and civility within society. It would be regrettable if Indonesia's diversity were not leveraged as a strength. Utilizing this diversity, such as by enhancing human resources to attract foreign tourists, can be beneficial, as Indonesia boasts both natural beauty and rich culture. Achieving this goal will require proactive government efforts, including approaches rooted in multicultural psychology, such as individual, relational, and ideological approaches.¹

1. Individual Approach

The individual approach focuses on developing multicultural personalities in religious practice. Recently, there has been a troubling increase in intolerance, contrary to Indonesia's core values of tolerance and moderation. This calls for efforts to discourage rigid, dogmatic religious practices that foster insularity and fanaticism. The formation of a multicultural personality can start within families, which can often influence individual personalities through intensive and exclusive religious practices. Parents play a critical role in helping children understand other religions and teaching openness and a positive attitude toward religious differences. The essence of a multicultural personality is to appreciate and tolerate one's own culture and that of others.

2. Relational Approach

The relational approach encourages communities to establish connections, promoting mutual familiarity and trust. Continued interaction builds opportunities for collaboration, reduces prejudice, and enhances tolerance. Multicultural relationships can develop in various settings, such as neighborhood interactions, educational contexts, and public or social media spaces. The role of society is critical here, as education provides a powerful platform for revitalizing multicultural communities. Schools affiliated with particular religions foster interactions that can strengthen relationships. Utilizing these opportunities, the relational approach significantly supports the revitalization of multicultural communities.

3. Ideological Approach

The ideological approach calls for the government to formulate policies that fairly represent all layers of society, protecting all, particularly minorities, from potential threats. Multiculturalism and ideology policies are inherently long-term, preserving existing traditions. Multiculturalism is deeply embedded in society, fostering respect toward diverse traditions. However, provocations that threaten tolerance and discrimination against other cultures remain challenges. Therefore, a

¹Mochamad Widjanarko DP Budi Susetyo, *Revitalisasi Toleransi Beragama Berbasis Kearifan Lokal* (Semarang: Penerbitan Universitas Katolik Soegijapranata, 2017).24.

consistent multiculturalism policy is essential to preserving multicultural traditions and fostering a strong sense of tolerance.

As an example, Kerta Buana Village is a community in Tenggara Seberang District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan Province, renowned for its ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Approximately 19 ethnic groups reside in this village, with the major groups including Balinese, Lombok, Javanese, Kutai, Banjar, Bugis, Batak, Manado, and Madurese. Five religions are represented, with Islam as the majority (about 65%), followed by Hinduism (around 30%), Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic, at about 3-4%), with smaller numbers adhering to Buddhism and indigenous beliefs.

Since 2017, the village has officially been recognized as a "harmony-conscious" village by the East Kalimantan Provincial Religious Affairs Department, although harmony among religious groups has existed informally since the 1980s, beginning with the transmigration era. Kerta Buana serves as a model for interfaith harmony, with national institutions such as the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), National Police Headquarters, National Armed Forces Headquarters, and the National Institute of Public Administration (LAN) having visited the village to study aspects related to harmonious coexistence. Village Secretary Mr. Heri expressed gratitude during an interview, affirming that Kerta Buana has never experienced prolonged or damaging conflicts over ethnicity, religion, or race.

The village is also known locally as "Bali Village" due to its predominant Balinese population, with Hindu religious observances like Galungan, Saraswati, Kuningan, and Nyepi celebrated as they are in Bali. This village is also celebrated as a "Pancasila Village" within East Kalimantan Province.

Kerta Buana's achievements stem from cooperative efforts among all parties, maintaining balance through effective program planning and management. Key elements in program management include relationship-building, conflict management, and action planning. As an example, Kerta Buana Village is a community in Tenggara Seberang District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan Province, renowned for its ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Approximately 19 ethnic groups reside in this village, with the major groups including Balinese, Lombok, Javanese, Kutai, Banjar, Bugis, Batak, Manado, and Madurese. Five religions are represented, with Islam as the majority (about 65%), followed by Hinduism (around 30%), Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic, at about 3-4%), with smaller numbers adhering to Buddhism and indigenous beliefs.

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B. Interpreting the Actualization of Religious Moderation in Multicultural Societies

The term "actualization" originates from "actual," meaning genuinely existing or happening. In the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), "actualization" is defined as the act of making something actual; realization. Conceptually, actualization refers to a practice of translating understanding into actions and everyday behaviors.

Daily life involves ongoing interactions among people, especially among individuals of different religious affiliations, reflecting humanity's intrinsic social nature. Close interfaith relations, free from conflict, are a shared goal, aligning with the aspiration for stable religious moderation. Hence, the establishment of interfaith harmony is essential. As citizens of Indonesia, it is critical to first understand the background that makes Indonesia a multicultural nation, rich in ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity.

The term "harmony" comes from "rukun" in Indonesian, meaning "good and peaceful; without conflict," according to KBBI. In the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and 8 of 2006, religious harmony is defined as "a state of interfaith relations marked by tolerance, mutual understanding, respect, equality in practicing one's religion, and cooperation within the community, nation, and state in the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution." Initially, "harmony" was a term for daily interactive communication. On November 30, 1967, Mohammad Dahlan convened the first interfaith deliberation, known as "religious harmony," later advanced by Mukti Ali,

²Rudy Harisyah Alam dan Daniel Rabitha, *Panduan Bina Desa Model Kerukunan*, Cetakan I (Jakarta: LIBANGDIKLAT PRESS, 2020). 38.

who served as Minister of Religion and is known as a pioneer of interfaith dialogue.

Religious moderation emphasizes fostering interfaith harmony to develop communities that live in unity. Religious harmony impacts other areas of life, including ethnicity, societal interactions, politics, and culture. Active harmony is an aspiration for each region, and achieving it requires contributions from all parties. Certain indicators of actively harmonious areas include: 1) having peaceful conflict resolution procedures and systems; 2) establishing interfaith cooperation in social or economic activities; and 3) providing organizations that facilitate various religious adherents.

Communities need a proper understanding of religious moderation; misinterpretations could lead to intolerance and prolonged conflicts. To cultivate tolerance in a multicultural society, individuals should recognize the importance of religious tolerance. In a multicultural context, Bretherton describes tolerance as an active effort to affirm individuals' religious freedom. Based on Pancasila democracy, tolerance acknowledges the "right of self-determination," which means the right of individuals to not infringe on others' rights. Tolerance manifests through two attitudes: allowing diverse beliefs to exist without opposing them and cooperating across various life aspects.

It is essential for communities to understand the primary factors leading to intergroup division, such as radicalism and extremism movements, whether by individuals or groups. Recently, research has identified signs or characteristics of individuals affected by radicalism and extremism. Key indicators of radicalism include rejecting democratic ideas or practices, supporting violent movements, justifying terrorism, denying minority rights, and rejecting women's rights and existence.³

C. Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Aspek Bermasyarakat

Religious moderation combines "moderation," from the Latin "moderatio," meaning "balance" or "being within appropriate limits," and "religion." Moderation is a global value embraced by many Indonesian traditions and religions. According to Indonesia's Ministry of Religion, religious moderation entails tolerance, respect for differences, and rejection of violence, extremism, and radicalism in religious practice. In Islam, moderation, known as "al-Wasath" (Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 143), signifies "the best and most perfect." In Islam, moderation emphasizes tolerance, mutual respect, and steadfast belief, allowing for fair and just outcomes.

The promotion of religious moderation is crucial for fostering mutual benefit, especially among people of different faiths. Religious moderation serves as a bridge across diversity and differences. Once religious moderation is established, the next

³Rifki Rosyad dkk, *Toleransi Beragama dan Harmonisasi Sosial*, Cetakan 1 (Bandung: Lekkas, 2021), 8.

step is to maintain balance to avoid veering towards right or left-wing extremism. Any lean toward extremes could lead to significant issues over time.

An essential aspect of religious moderation is its perspective, particularly in how communities act and behave with commitment to diversity without causing division. Religious moderation aims to address divisions arising from differences, which can threaten individuals and the sense of national unity rooted in Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, Bhineka Tunggal Ika, and NKRI. Thus, religious moderation offers a solution to divisions based on diversity.

All religious adherents deserve recognition, legal protection, and equal status among different faiths. Society must not experience social, cultural, or political burdens due to their religious affiliations. Religion holds substantial influence in Indonesia, affecting political aspects through faith-based organizations and impacting creativity and individual freedom. Religion regulates aspects of life, often playing a central role in both social and personal domains.

Promoting a moderate approach to religion that openly accepts other faiths is known as religious moderation. Moderate attitudes are essential for preventing conflict caused by differences. Religious moderation is an innovative approach amidst Indonesia's diversity. Considering recent dynamics, religious moderation should resonate with individuals, emphasizing its importance as a foundation for unity in Indonesia. Through religious moderation, communities uphold diversity, honoring this as a form of gratitude and respect for the nation's founders.

D. Upaya Mengaktualisasikan Moderasi Beragama di Desa Kerta Buana

According to Mr. Hary, the Village Secretary, the village government strives to foster understanding, guidance, and socialization of religious moderation among adherents of various religions. These efforts are conducted with utmost fairness, addressing the needs of both majority religions such as Islam and Hinduism, as well as other faiths. The participation of all stakeholders—village authorities, religious leaders, and the community—is essential to nurturing mutual harmony and awareness. Instilling these values from an early stage is crucial. Various initiatives have been implemented by the Kerta Buana Village government, including:

1. Holding the Grand Tabligh Akbar on the 43rd Anniversary of Kerta Buana Village



Image 1. Ustadz Das'ad Lathif

This event took place on Friday, November 1, 2023, marking the first Grand Tabligh Akbar organized by the village. It featured prominent speaker Ustadz Das'ad Latif, S.Sos., S.Ag., M.Si., Ph.D., a celebrated figure from Makassar, South Sulawesi. This event received significant enthusiasm from both Muslim and non-Muslim community members, highlighting a strong sense of care, solidarity, and interreligious awareness. Notably, the event was supported by local organizations such as the Muslim Family Harmony (KKM) and the Forum for Interfaith Harmony (FKUB). Even the village head, who is not a Muslim, provided direction and

encouragement, helping ensure the event's success through collective community efforts. According to Mr. Hary, the event met its objectives well, fostering cooperation across the community.⁴

2. Establishment of the Muslim Family Harmony (KKM)

The Muslim Family Harmony Association, or KKM, is an organization dedicated to guiding and supporting the Muslim community in religious activities. Established on April 17, 2017, KKM had approximately 378 members by the end of 2023, with membership continuing to grow. The formation of KKM was prompted by the need for a social organization to support the Muslim community, given the considerable Muslim population in Kerta Buana Village. Local religious figures and community members convened to discuss and officially establish KKM as a social organization for the village's Muslim population. Following its establishment, short-, medium-, and long-term work programs were devised.

One of KKM's prominent initiatives is the instruction on the religious rites known as fardhu kifayah. These activities include training on the proper procedures for preparing a deceased person for burial, including washing, shrouding, praying over, and interring the deceased. Experts from the regional government and Ministry of Religious Affairs facilitated these sessions, which were met with great enthusiasm from the community, allowing them to better understand and practice fardhu kifayah rites.

Another ongoing program is the annual pre-Ramadan cleaning of places of worship. To fund these activities, a monthly contribution of 10,000 rupiah is collected from residents, with additional support provided by the village government due to the broad benefits generated by KKM's activities.⁵

3. Village-Level Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)

While the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is present throughout Indonesia, the MUI at the village level in East Kalimantan Province was first established in Kerta Buana Village. The purpose of this MUI is to provide a consultative forum regarding religious rulings and facilitate communication channels. This village-level MUI was created to address religious concerns that existing institutions had not been able to resolve, thus establishing a broader, religious-based organizational framework to oversee religious activities in Kerta Buana. The MUI operates in coordination with district, provincial, and even national MUIs.

The establishment of a village-level MUI is intended to support the community, assist in matters of religious understanding, and offer guidance, especially to Muslims in Kerta Buana. While its programs mirror those at the district level, they are tailored

⁴Hery Wibawa, Wawancara, Desa Kerta Buana, 15 April 2024.

⁵ Slamet, Wawancara, Desa Kerta Buana, 23 April 2024.

to the village's specific needs. The MUI's funding is primarily supported by the village government, as the institution was recommended by local authorities. Additional funding is also obtained from companies operating within the village.⁶

4. Establishing a School for the Hindu Community

The majority of Kerta Buana Village residents practice Hinduism, with the Balinese ethnic group representing the largest segment of the population. To meet educational and spiritual needs, the village government established a kindergarten specifically for Hindu adherents. This institution operates under the Parisada Hindu religious council, which focuses on social and religious matters. The school, known as Kudungga Kindergarten, was founded on July 9, 2021, under the direction of Putu Ria, with its establishment funded by the Pesanggrahan Pertiwi Nanda Foundation. The school was founded to fulfill the Hindu community's demand for religious education. Currently, it has 27 students and is overseen by the Department of Religious Affairs of Kutai Kartanegara Regency.

Since its inception, many Hindu families have enrolled their children in Kudungga Kindergarten, as its educational approach fosters children's development in religious, social, and educational aspects. For instance, students are encouraged to develop social awareness, exemplified by accompanying bereaved families and offering condolences. Children are also taught to distribute offerings (*canang*) during significant Hindu celebrations..

Gambar 2. TK Kudungga



⁶ Slamet, Wawancara, Desa Kerta Buana, 23 April 2024.

5. Organizing the Dharmasanti Celebration for East Kalimantan Province

Dharmasanti is a traditional gathering held as part of the Hindu Nyepi festival, where participants seek mutual forgiveness and vow to avoid further mistakes. This occasion aims to nurture and reinforce unity within the Hindu community, serving as a model of harmony for followers of other religions. This year, the Dharmasanti celebration in Kerta Buana was observed with great solemnity, attracting attendees not only from the village but from various regions across East Kalimantan. Given the growing interest from other areas, the village government plans to enhance future celebrations and establish Dharmasanti as an annual event.

In summary, these initiatives exemplify the village's commitment to promoting religious moderation in Kerta Buana. Although formal recognition for religious tolerance has not yet been widely implemented, the village government remains dedicated to maintaining and expanding religious activities that emphasize unity and respect across faiths. Current recognitions have mostly been informal, with the village government aiming to provide equitable support for these initiatives, particularly in terms of facilities and infrastructure.

Conclusion

Indonesia is a multicultural nation where efforts to actualize religious moderation must be fully optimized. Embracing the concept of religious moderation fosters balanced religious practices that promote tolerance and interfaith harmony, ensuring no biases or inclinations toward any particular belief. This approach empowers individuals within a multicultural society, which is diverse in ethnicity, language, culture, and religion, to freely express their rights. Such an approach requires well-planned, strategic initiatives. This is precisely what the government of Kerta Buana Village has endeavored to implement. As a prominent village in East Kalimantan, Kerta Buana has both challenges and privileges that call for gratitude to God Almighty. The village exemplifies harmony and tolerance through programs managed by both religious organizations and local governance, all working together for collective success. The collaboration across different religions truly demonstrates the beauty of harmonious living amidst diverse backgrounds.

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